

A Second Life- Elementary Blues

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Summary: Brittana one-shot from A Second Life universe. The Lopez family negotiates life with two eight-year-olds, and handle a difficult day with the kids.

A Second Life- Elementary Blues

I sighed as I looked at my email. There was another emergency that required the attention of the legal department today. I did not want to deal with this right now. I had half a mind to just close my laptop and pretend I never saw it, claiming that I had a doctor's appointment or something and needed to leave early. That way I could push off the 'emergency' until tomorrow.

My cell phone rang, and I was thankful for a legitimate distraction. I frowned as I saw the elementary school's number on the screen. I hoped nothing was wrong with either of the kids. The last time we got a call from the school, it was because Norah had punched a boy for making fun of Declan's dinosaur lunchbox. That was a couple of years ago, though.

"Hello?" I answered cautiously.

"Hi. Is this Mrs. Lopez?"

The friendly voice on the other end almost made me relax. "Yes, it is."

"This is Debbie Morton, the nurse at Emerson Elementary," the woman said. "I'm sorry to tell you that Declan hurt himself today at recess. I'm afraid he may have a broken arm, so I am going to need someone to pick him up to take him to the hospital."

My heart stopped dead when she said that Declan was hurt. I was almost about to panic thinking about how much pain he was probably in if his arm was broken. My poor, sweet little boy. I immediately

jumped into action. I closed my laptop and thrust it into my laptop case. I threw a couple of files in there that I was sure I was going to need tonight.

"I am on my way. Either myself or my wife will be there shortly to get him," I told the nurse. "What happened exactly?"

"He fell off the monkey bars and landed pretty hard on his arm. There is nothing too glaringly obvious to say that it is broken, but I definitely do recommend he gets x-rays due to the amount of pain he seems to be in and the way he is holding it."

I hated the fact that the school couldn't even do anything more than call the parents to take the kid to the hospital unless it was a legitimate emergency. But I understood there were rules. I grabbed my purse and my laptop bag and made my way out of my office.

"Are you sure it's just his arm? He didn't hit his head or anything?" I asked, just to make sure.

"Yes, it was just his arm. The teacher who saw it said that he didn't see him hit his head on anything, and Declan said that he didn't either."

I was relieved at that, but I knew I would be making the doctor give him a full check over when we got to the hospital. "Okay. Tell him that we will be there soon. Thank you."

I disconnected the call and stopped in to my boss's office. He was busy, so I left a message with his secretary to tell him that I had a family emergency and needed to leave. She promised to relay the information, and I hurried to get to my car so I could get to my son as fast as possible.

I dialed Brittany as I walked.

"Hey, baby," she greeted. "To what do I owe this pleasure?"

It was definitely an unusual occurrence for me to call her during the middle of the work day. We would text back and forth, and we would talk on our lunch breaks, but we wouldn't call each other during regular working hours normally.

"Declan got hurt at school," I hurried to explain. "He fell off the monkey bars and the nurse thinks he broke his arm. I am heading to the school now to pick him up to take him to the hospital."

"I'm on my way," Brittany replied, her tone immediately concerned. "Is she sure he didn't hurt anything else? Did he hit his head?"

"She said he didn't, but I want to make sure he gets fully checked out at the hospital."

"Yeah. Yeah, for sure," she said, sounding distracted.

I heard her tell her boss that she needed to leave due to a family emergency, and I knew she was definitely in a rush like I was. I had made it to my car and I opened the door, throwing my stuff inside and climbing in.

"I'm at my car, so I am going to get off to drive. I will see you at the school?"

"Yeah, I will meet you there. Tell him I said that everything will be okay if you beat me there," Brittany requested.

"Will do. I love you."

"Love you, too."

I started the car and backed out of my space, trying to keep from peeling out of the lot too quickly and risking an accident. It was hard to concentrate on driving when I was freaking out about my son. I hated to think of him being in pain and probably scared. He had never been seriously hurt before. He had needed a couple of stitches on his chin once when he had slipped in the bathroom and hit it on the edge of the tub. But he was pretty calm then. I think mostly because Brittany had kept him calm.

After what seemed like an eternity (but was only twenty minutes), I pulled into the school's parking lot. I quickly got out of the car and locked it, practically running in my heels to the front door. I checked in with the security guard in order to get in and hurried to the nurse's office, the clacking of my shoes on the floor echoing in the hallway.

I pushed open the door to find Declan sitting on the cot, cradling his left arm against his chest. His dark hair was disheveled more than usual, and his eyes were red-rimmed. He had definitely been crying.

Norah was sitting on the cot next to him, her own eyes reddened and still glistening with tears. She was an emotional girl, and she loved her brother a lot. Seeing him in pain upset her.

Both of them looked up at me as I rushed into the room.

"Mami," Norah said, relieved that one of her moms was finally there.

"Hey, babies," I said soothingly, moving quickly to both of them. I gave Norah a quick hug and pressed a kiss to her head before turning to Declan. I cradled his face in my hands and looked into his eyes, which were starting to pool with tears again. "It's okay, D. Mami is here now."

He tried to be tough, but there is only so much an eight-year-old can do when he is in a lot of pain.

"It hurts," he whined, and my heart just about broke at how hurt he sounded.

"I know," I murmured as I leaned in and kissed his forehead. "We will get you taken care of, I promise."

His tears spilled over and he sniffed, trying to hold them back. I cradled him gently into me before reaching my right arm to pull Norah in as well. She came willingly and I heard her sniffles join her brother's.

The sound of a door behind me made me pull away a little to crane my neck around. I saw Brittany coming through the doorway, her face flushed from rushing and her blonde hair mussed. Seeing her so completely worried nearly made my armor crumble.

"See, mama is here now, so we can get you all taken care of," I said cheerfully in an effort to try to calm all of us down.

Norah pulled back from me and turned to Brittany. She slid down off of the cot and ran to Brittany, who crouched down and hugged her tightly. Norah clung to her mama, who then proceeded to pepper her cheek with kisses to make her smile.

It worked. Norah gave a little giggle.

"I am gonna check on your brother now, okay," Brittany said to Norah before standing up. She came over to the cot, hugging Norah to her side with one arm.

I moved out of her way so she could see our son.

"Hey, big man," she said softly. "Were you trying out some fancy acrobatics or something?"

Declan gave a little smile, which was the best thing I had seen from him since I walked in here. Brittany had a way of calming down both of the kids, and, as a result, me as well. She ran her hand through his hair as he shook his head.

"No, I climbed on top of the monkey bars and my foot slipped and I fell," he explained on a rush. His tears were fading now, and Brittany gave him a bit of a playful smile.

"Well, now we know you're not a monkey," she teased. "Maybe we should keep your feet on the ground for awhile, then, huh?"

Norah laughed quietly and Declan rolled his eyes but smiled at the same time. It was such a me move that I couldn't help but smile as well. It looked like we would be able to keep everyone calm. At least for now.

The nurse chose that moment to make an appearance from her office. "Hello, Mrs. and Mrs. Lopez. I am assuming you want to take both Declan and Norah with you?" I nodded. "Okay. We just need you to sign them out and you can be on your way to the hospital."

My body involuntarily tensed at hearing the word hospital. The last time we had all been in the hospital was when the twins were born and Brittany almost died. Brittany could feel it and she shot me a sympathetic look.

"Sounds good," Brittany said, holding Norah closer since she was clinging to Brittany a little tighter now that she knew we had to go to the hospital.

We did what we needed to and we carefully maneuvered Declan out to Brittany's car. As cool and calm as she looked on the outside, I knew she was freaking on the inside. I didn't want her to get too weak from the stress, so I drove to the hospital. She kept the kids

talking and tried to keep Declan's mind off of the pain.

I dropped Brittany and Declan off at the emergency room. Thankfully, Norah didn't put up too much of a protest with not being able to go with her mama and her brother into the ER right away. I parked and Norah and I made our way up to the entrance. Brittany was sitting next to Declan and filling out paperwork. There weren't too many people in the waiting area, so I could only hope that it meant that we would be able to get seen fairly quickly.

I sat down next to Declan and pulled Norah onto my lap. She leaned back into me and relaxed, and I took comfort in her weight on me. It helped to ground me and make me remember that we had another child that was scared, too. I wanted to panic over our son, but I couldn't.

Brittany sighed, drawing my attention. "I hate filling these stupid things out," she muttered.

"You want me to do it?" I offered.

She shook her head, as I expected. Filling out the forms would keep her busy, and make her feel like she was actually doing something. It gave her a little bit of control over the situation and, being in the hospital, she was going to want to have as much control as she could so she didn't start freaking out.

So the paperwork was her way of coping. Mine was to hold Norah close and wrap my arm around Declan's shoulders while I watched the hospital staff closely to see if we would be able to get back to see a doctor soon.

"How you doing, baby?" I asked our son, concerned since he was being extremely quiet.

"I'm okay," he said quietly, which made me frown.

Brittany shot him a worried glance of her own, and our eyes met. We communicated our silent concern to each other, knowing that he really must be in a lot of pain if he was being so quiet and subdued. I mean, he was an eight-year-old boy.

I looked at him closely and saw how pale he was looking. I could see that the pain was worse by the tightening of his mouth and the way he was sitting so tensely. He needed to be seen soon. I shot Brittany another look, and she understood.

She took the completed paperwork up to the window and I watched as she talked to the woman briefly. I knew she was trying to explain that Declan was in a lot of pain and we would appreciate if we could get him back soon so he could get some pain meds. Brittany walked back and I could tell that she wasn't too happy with the woman's response, but that she was okay enough to not put up a fight.

I looked at her questioningly.

"She said it shouldn't be too long, but they can't promise anything," Brittany explained.

I sighed, knowing how hospitals operated. Declan wasn't in any

life-threatening danger, so he could wait in their eyes. In our eyes, our son needed to be seen now so he could start getting the proper treatment.

Brittany wrapped her own arm around Declan's shoulders, and I removed mine so she could pull our son into her side gently. He rested his head against her shoulder and she started to run her hand through his hair soothingly.

"You need a haircut, D," she murmured.

He just shook his head in protest. He liked the idea of growing his hair out longer. It was apparently the 'cool' thing to do. Brittany loved the slight curls in his hair as it got longer, but she couldn't stand his hair getting into his eyes. She said she liked to see his eyes clearly since they looked so much like mine.

Personally, I thought that his hair was fine as it was. I loved when his hair got long enough to see his curls. As he had gotten older, his hair lost most of its natural curl, and they only made an appearance as it grew out. Norah's hair was completely straight, but she had a couple little curlicues in the fine hairs at the base of her neck.

We sat anxiously waiting until they finally called for Declan. It really hadn't been that long of a wait. Maybe only thirty minutes, but thirty minutes when you are waiting for your hurt kid to be seen feels like an eternity.

We made our way back behind the door that separated the waiting room from the ER, and we answered some questions for the nurse as he took some of Declan's vitals. Declan got a hospital ID band put onto his uninjured wrist. We were shown to a curtained off bed, and the nurse was kind enough to help lift Declan up onto it to sit. We were then told that the doctor would be with us shortly.

"What is all of this?" Norah asked, pointing to the drawers likely containing medical supplies and an IV pump on a pole.

"That's stuff that the doctors will use to treat their patients," Brittany said as she sat down in one of the available chairs. She pulled Norah into her lap and I saw her wince slightly as our daughter settled onto her. I sent her a worried glance, afraid that the stress was already getting to her and causing her pain. She shook her head, letting me know that she was okay and it was likely just our daughter's bony butt that dug into her leg uncomfortably for a minute.

"Will they need to use it on Declan?" Norah asked, her eyes big and worried.

"Well, they might," I said. Since I wasn't sure all what kinds of things were kept in the drawers, I had no idea if any of it would actually need to be used. I assumed there were probably needles and syringes and things like that around, so they might have to use that. "But we don't know exactly what is wrong with him yet to know what the doctor will need to do."

I sat down on the bed next to Declan, who was looking more nervous than ever now that we were actually back in the emergency room. I

rubbed his back gently, trying to get him to calm down.

"Will he need to get a shot?"

"Maybe, sweetie. But let's wait for the doctor to look at him before we start saying what is going to happen," Brittany told Norah.

Just then the doctor walked in.

"Good afternoon, I'm Dr. Stevens," she greeted, offering a kind smile around the curtained room. She walked toward Declan, her whole demeanor gentle and calming. I still refused to move from my son's side, even when she addressed him. "How'd you hurt your arm, buddy?"

"I fell off the monkey bars at school," he said quietly, leaning into me. I continued to rub his back.

"Well that can definitely make you hurt your arm," she said teasingly. "Do you mind if I take a look?"

Declan looked at me, as if he were unsure if it was okay that the doctor examine his arm. "It's okay, D," I assured him.

He turned back to the doctor and nodded. She smiled at me and then him before reaching gently for his arm. She tried to be as tender as she could with her examination, but he still winced and tensed up with pain when she ran her fingers over a certain point.

"Okay, thanks Declan," she said when she was done and put his hand softly back onto his lap. "What I want to do is send you for an x-ray so I can get a picture of the bones in your arm. Your mom can come with if you want her to?"

Declan looked confused, his glance going between Brittany and I. I almost laughed at his inability to know which one of us she was talking about.

"D, you can either have mama or me go back with you. Whichever you prefer," I told him, and his face softened in relief.

"Can I have mama?" Declan asked. I wasn't offended, because I knew that Brittany helped to keep him calm.

"Sure, big man," Brittany said. "Norah, you wanna hang out with mami for a few minutes?"

Norah nodded, and Brittany maneuvered her off of her lap so she could come by our son. The doctor sent me an apologetic smile at her mistake, and I just waved her off. It happened, and she wasn't exactly rude about any of it. I made my way over to Norah and sat with her while Brittany took my place next to Declan.

"Just sit tight here for a few minutes and I will have someone wheel you down to radiology," Dr. Stevens told Brittany and Declan before heading out of the curtain.

"You're being such a good sport about all of this," Brittany told him. "So do you want to get something special to eat after this?"

"Can we get ice cream?" Norah asked excitedly.

"Honey, let Declan decide what he wants," I chastised her. She pouted, but I saw her mouth 'ice cream' to her brother in an effort to get him to go with her wishes.

"Can we get pizza for dinner? And maybe ice cream cones, too?" Declan asked sheepishly.

I knew we wouldn't be able to deny him anything tonight, and my suspicions were confirmed when Brittany already started nodding.

"Absolutely. Pizza and ice cream it is," she declared.

We chatted for a bit to keep his mind off of his arm as much as possible, and eventually someone came around with a wheelchair to take him and Brittany to radiology. Declan seemed excited to ride in the wheelchair, and that lifted both mine and Brittany's spirits to see him starting to cheer up a little.

"Mami, will Declan need surgery like you and mama had?" Norah asked, surprising me.

We had to explain the origins of Brittany's scar to the twins since hers was easily visible if she wore a low cut top or a bathing suit. And since we discussed her having surgery in the past, we also told them about how I had surgery so they could be born. I didn't even think that Norah would assume that her brother would need surgery.

"Why do you ask?"

"Well, a boy at school said his daddy had a broken leg and he had to have surgery for it. I was just wondering if Declan was going to need it too if he has a broken arm. And will he have a scar like mama's?"

I smoothed her hair back from her forehead as I pulled her into me a little tighter with my other arm. "We don't even know for sure yet if his arm is broken, Norah. But if, for some reason, he does need surgery then he will have a scar kind of like mama's," I explained.

"Will he have to stay here?" Her voice trembled a little as she asked, and I knew that she was afraid of the possibility that her brother would need surgery and they would be separated involuntarily for the first time in their lives.

"I don't think he will need it, baby girl, so don't worry," I told her soothingly.

She shifted in my lap and laid her head against my chest, leaning heavily into me like she used to do when she was a baby and wanted comfort. I held her head against me with one hand while the other rubbed up and down her back.

The time seemed to drag on forever, but I was okay sitting there snuggling with my daughter with the knowledge that my son was with

his other mother being well taken care of. Eventually the front of the wheelchair came into view before Brittany and Declan became visible. The employee pushed him up to the bed and then helped him back up onto the mattress before pushing the wheelchair back out.

"Did you become radioactive?" I asked teasingly once he was settled. "Are we going to have another superhero on our hands?"

"I don't think so," he giggled. "They just put my arm on a table and told me not to move."

"Well, that's boring," I deadpanned. I turned my attention to Norah and began tickling her. "Isn't that boring?"

She giggled, trying to fight off my hands unsuccessfully. "Mami, stop!"

"I can't! The tickle monster's taken over me," I exclaimed, my eyes widening dramatically and making her laugh harder.

Declan started laughing, and Brittany was smiling as she watched us.

"Mama! Help!" Norah pleaded.

"I dunno if I can. I'm afraid the tickle monster will get me, too," she said, feigning horror.

"Please?" Norah begged breathlessly around her laughter.

"Okay," Brittany sighed. "I think I know just how to make the tickle monster stop."

She tiptoed slowly over to the chairs while I continued tickling our daughter, keeping one eye on my wife's approach. I smirked at her, having a feeling of what she was going to do. She just raised an eyebrow back at me, fighting off a smile. Once she got close enough, she pounced.

Brittany grabbed my face between her hands and kissed me soundly. My hands immediately stuttered to a stop on Norah as the feeling of my wife's lips on mine made my mind blank momentarily, as it usually did when we kissed. I smiled into it and brought one of my hands up to Brittany's wrist to hold it in place.

I felt her smile against my lips before she pulled back, her eyes twinkling. She shot me a wink, making my breath catch. She chuckled, catching my reaction and I playfully scowled at her.

"See, Norah. I know how to tame the tickle monster," Brittany said, turning to Norah with a smile.

"Thanks, mama," she panted, still trying to fight off the remains of her giggles.

"You're welcome, sweetie."

Brittany caressed my cheek with her thumb a final time before she straightened. I slid my hand from her wrist down and intertwined our

fingers together. I didn't want her to walk away just yet. I knew she could use my strength, just as I could use hers.

She squeezed my hand tightly. I was grateful for her knowing what I needed. I knew it was hard for her being back in a hospital, but it was honestly worse for me. I only prayed that we would get out of here with relatively good news. After the years of reliving the horror of Brittany's hospitalization and the twins' risky birth, I had come a long way with counseling. But just being here with the whole family again was starting to make me freak out a little, especially after Norah brought up Brittany's and my surgeries.

The curtain moved back again, and Dr. Stevens made an appearance. This time she gave a regretful smile. "I'm sorry to say that Declan did indeed fracture his arm," she said. "The good news is that it is a simple fracture, so if we just put a cast on it he should be good to go in a short period of time. Just maybe don't fall off the monkey bars anymore, huh?"

I breathed a sigh of relief, and Brittany's hand tightened in mine in comfort and relief of her own.

"I get a cast? Cool!" Declan exclaimed, his excitement at having a cool apparatus on his arm now taking over any nerves he had been experiencing.

"You do, buddy," Dr. Stevens said. "But let's get you some pain medication first and then we can look at getting you fitted for a cast."

She turned to Brittany and I and asked if he was allergic to any medications. After confirming that he wasn't and that he was okay swallowing pills, she went off to get what she needed. A nurse came by a few minutes later with a small tablet and a cup of water. Brittany got him to take the pill easily and the nurse left.

A nurse came and got him a few minutes later and he was taken back to get his cast.

"How are you doing?" I asked Brittany.

She turned and gave me a small smile. "Okay. A little tired at the moment."

I frowned a little and studied her, making sure she wasn't trying to hide if she was getting weak or hurting. I understood if she was tired, because this whole ordeal was wearing me out, too. Thankfully it looked as if she was telling the truth.

"How about we plan on all cuddling up on the couch in our pj's and eating our pizza while watching a movie," I suggested to both Norah and Brittany.

"Yeah!" Norah enthused in my lap.

Brittany smiled happily. "That sounds great, baby."

I returned her smile, glad I could cheer her up, if only a little. "Then we have a plan!"

Things went a little quicker from there. Declan was brought back with a blue cast on his left arm. We were given discharge papers and a prescription to help with his pain, and then we finally left.

We drove back to the school to get the other car. I told Brittany to head home with the kids and order some pizza and pick out a movie. I would swing by the store and fill Declan's prescription and pick up some ice cream. Chocolate for Norah and I, mint chocolate chip for Brittany, and strawberry for Declan.

It also gave me some time to ground myself before going home. I knew Brittany would want to be close to the kids tonight, just like I would. But, whereas Brittany was already feeling better with Declan heading home, I was more stressed at the thought of my son suffering in pain at home and me being unable to do enough to help. Just like I was unable to help my wife when she was sick and hospitalized. It was my biggest fear to be unable to help my family when they needed it the most.

All I could do was help out in the best way that I could. Which, right now, was filling a prescription and getting ice cream.

Once I had gotten all I needed, I headed home to find Brittany, Norah, and Declan already changed into their pajamas. They told me to hurry up and join them. I put the ice cream in the freezer and the prescription on the counter before heading back to our bedroom.

Our two labs, one chocolate and one black, followed me enthusiastically. They were only one and two years old, respectively, so they had a lot of energy. Which was great for the kids. It was going to be a little tough to keep Declan from roughhousing with them though while he was hurt.

I grabbed some pajama pants and a loose t-shirt and changed from my work clothes. I felt so much better already. I pulled my hair up into a messy ponytail and removed the make-up from my face. I was ready to pig out on some pizza and ice cream with my wife and kids and watch a movie.

"Come on Anna and Luke," I called after the dogs as I headed out of the bedroom. Norah had named the female chocolate lab after Princess Anna from Frozen, where Declan had named the black lab Luke Skywalker since he had become a big Star Wars fan. I was just grateful they were at least somewhat original with naming their pets, much like their mama, and we weren't stuck with a 'Blackie' or a 'Brownie'.

"So what are we watching?" I asked once I got into the living room.

"Big Hero 6," Declan replied, sounding a little sleepy. He was snuggled up against Brittany on the couch.

"Oooh, I love that movie," I gushed. I did actually really like that movie. It was cute, and something I definitely wouldn't mind watching tonight.

Before I was able to sit down the doorbell rang. I paid for the pizza and took the box into the living room. I coerced Norah into helping me get paper plates and napkins while I grabbed drinks for everyone.

Then we went back to the living room and settled down onto the couch.

Declan shifted away from Brittany so I could sit between them. Norah sat on Brittany's other side. Brittany pressed play on the movie and we dug into our pizza. I helped Declan a little since he was struggling with only being able to use one arm, but he was doing pretty well on his own.

We all snuggled in together on the couch, and I had my head on Brittany's shoulder as Declan leaned into me. I could feel his weight getting heavier on me as the events of the day started to take their toll. Norah was laying her head in Brittany's lap, and Brittany was running her fingers through her hair. Her other arm was around my shoulders, with her hand resting on Declan's head.

I felt at peace. Despite the bad turn of the day, I had everything I could ever want here on this couch. Not to mention the two dogs lying at our feet and the cat eyeing the leftover pizza on the coffee table. Raising kids was hard, but Brittany and I seemed to have learned to handle it pretty well. Even with the curveballs we got thrown, we always were able to end the day together, as a family. And I absolutely loved that.

I turned my head to press a kiss to Brittany's shoulder. Her arm tightened around me as she pressed a kiss to my head. I had a feeling we wouldn't be getting any ice cream tonight. The call of sleep was too strong for us all. But that was just fine with us.

A/N: So, I wasn't too thrilled with this one, but I started it and I had to finish it. I guess it just gave a glimpse into their lives as the kids are getting a little older. And, regardless of bad things happening, they always find a way to make it through and be happy in the end. I know it seems like a lot of sad/bad things are happening these past few one-shots, but that happens sometimes in life. Anyways, let me know what you think!

**This will be the last you hear from me for about a month. I am currently starting the last chapter of my AU story, so once that is done and edited I can start posting it. It won't be until after I come back from vacation though. There will also be probably another two one-shots from this 'verse, and then my other story will start getting posted! I appreciate you all for sticking around and reading this drive! **

End
file.